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Maximising Your Potential

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Eric Garner

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Maximising Your Potential: Be all you can be!
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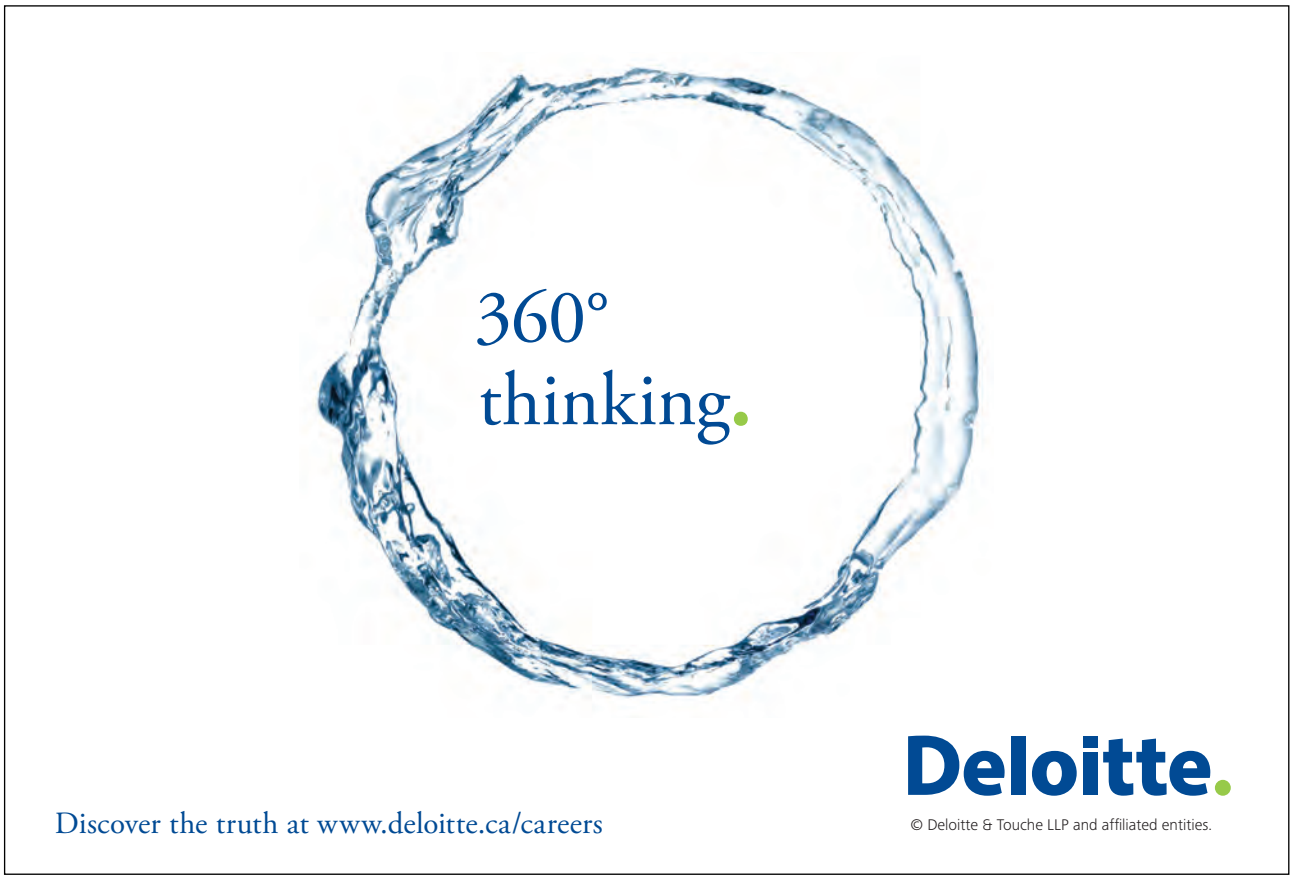

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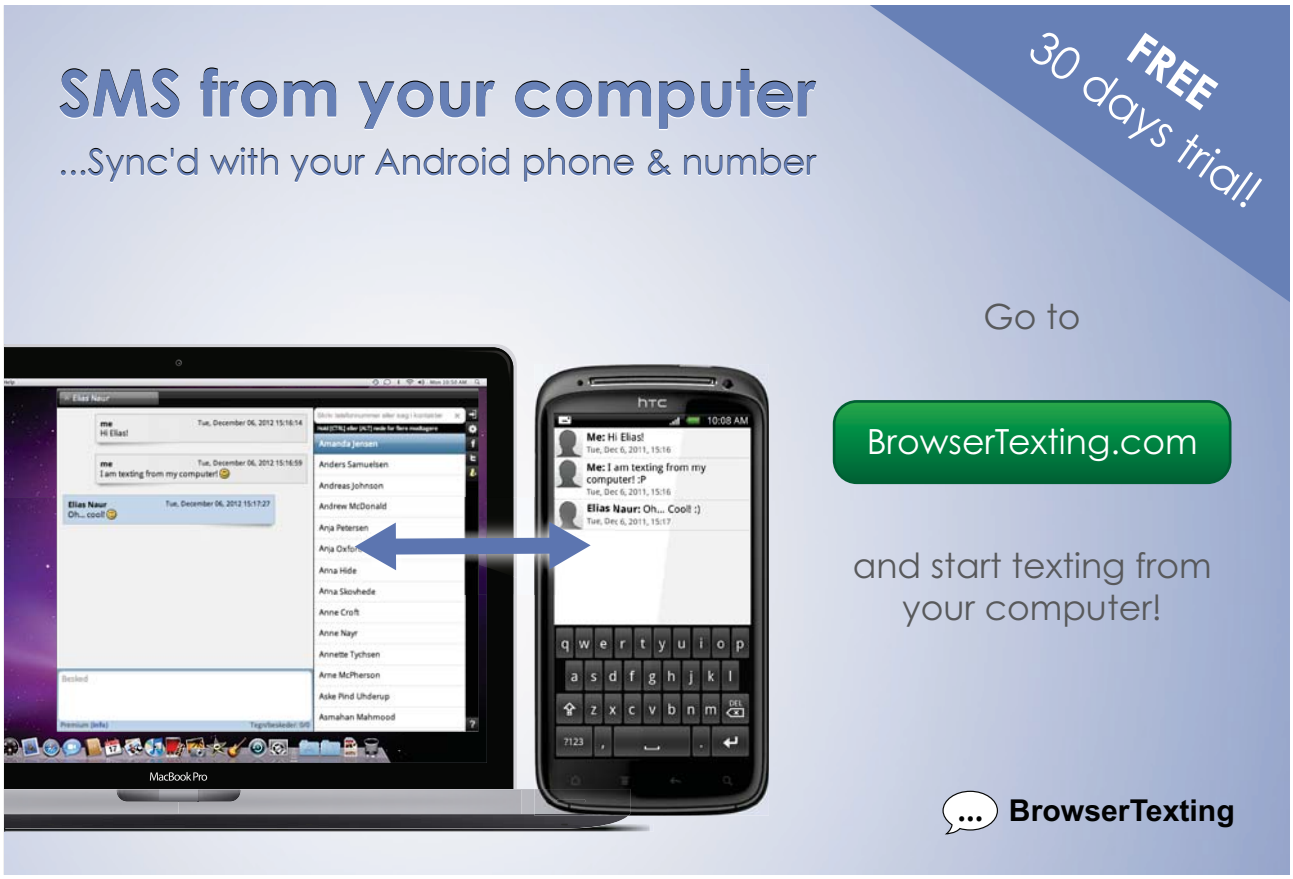

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Preface

Introduction to Maximising Your Potential

Each of us is unique. Like snowflakes that look the same but under the microscope are different, we each have our own specialness that nobody else possesses. We have our own physical attributes, our own mental make-up, our own environmental background, and our own cultural inheritance. But more than all these, we have our own special, unique, and un-copiable talents. These talents are our gifts for life on earth. Some of us search in vain for their own special talents and never realize them fully before they die. Others come to them late in life after journeys that take them down dead-end streets. And others discover them early and are able to develop their special talents for their own joy and that of others.

This book will guide you on your own self-development through life. It will show you how to find out where your talents lie; how to use them to set goals; how to realize those goals through self-programming; what qualities you need to nurture your talents and bring them to fruition; and why developing your potential can be the most wonderful journey you will ever take. This book is quite simply your companion to fully realizing who you are.

Profile of Author Eric Garner

Eric Garner is an experienced management trainer with a knack for bringing the best out of individuals and teams. Eric founded ManageTrainLearn in 1995 as a corporate training company in the UK specialising in the 20 skills that people need for professional and personal success today. Since 2002, as part of KSA Training Ltd, ManageTrainLearn has been a major player in the e-learning market. Eric has a simple mission: to turn ManageTrainLearn into the best company in the world for producing and delivering quality online management products.

Profile of ManageTrainLearn

ManageTrainLearn is one of the top companies on the Internet for management training products, materials, and resources. Products range from training course plans to online courses, manuals to teambuilder exercises, mobile management apps to one-page skill summaries and a whole lot more. Whether you're a manager, trainer, or learner, you'll find just what you need at ManageTrainLearn to skyrocket your professional and personal success.
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1 What Is Potential?

We each possess skills and abilities that nobody else possesses quite like we do. We are each gifted with unique strengths and talents, whether this is a talent for display on the world stage, or on a small stage as someone who makes a difference to just a few other people. So how do we make the most of our personal potential? By creating the right mindset. Here are the key features of the maximising potential mindset.

1.1 Self-Improvement

There are two pulls in the human condition: to stay where we are and consolidate what we have or to discover what is still possible, what we could achieve, how far we could go. The result of these two opposing pulls is that some of us - perhaps the majority - choose the path of safety and security while wondering what we might have missed. Others take risks, go on adventures, seek to maximise what they possess, even at the expense of a quiet life. Managing the discovery of potential at minimum risk is the skill of self-development.

1.2 Happiness and Goals

Philosophers since Aristotle have linked happiness with the attainment of goals. That is why we find so much satisfaction when we reach our goals and happiness in the work that takes us there. For many people however, life is unhappy and unfulfilled. Daniel Yankelovich carried out extensive research into how people felt about their workplace achievements. 8 out of 10 people admitted that they could do much better. In a study by the California State University, Fullerton, 80% of people wished they were in a different job than the one they were in In a University of Michigan study, more than one in four employees surveyed said they were so unhappy with the products they made at work that they wouldn't use them themselves.

1.3 Our Unique Talents

It is the mix of talents and other factors which produces potential. Potential can be regarded as the sum of talent, personality, will power, self-belief, drive and ambition, circumstances, opportunities and positive thinking.

"If a man has a talent and cannot use it he has failed, If he has a talent and uses only half of it he has partly failed. If he has a talent and learns somehow to use the whole of it, he has gloriously succeeded and won a satisfaction and triumph few men ever know." (Thomas Wolfe)

The studies of self-development writers tell us that every single one of us possesses talents in some form or another. Our talents do not depend on background, upbringing, social class, job, ability or disability; hence the belief that they are divinely gifted. None of us possesses a greater or lesser talent than any other person. It is their use and application which distinguishes the so-called "talented" from the so-called "less-talented".

1.4 Our Own Special Genius

The word "genius" means innate talent. It derives from the Roman mythological belief that everyone had two guardian spirits which attended them from birth to death; "geno" is Latin for "to be born". One of the spirits was a good genius and brought good fortune; the other was an "evil genius" and brought bad fortune.

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More popularly, the name "genius" is given to people who have displayed outstanding human achievements, endurance or accomplishments. We think of people like Alexander the Great, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci; Shakespeare, Goethe, Newton, Napoleon, Mozart, Einstein, Churchill, and in our own times, Bill Gates. But these people were no different from us. Their physiques, brain sizes, human strengths and qualities were essentially no different from any other. What was possible for them is also possible for us.

But these people were no different from us. Their physiques, brain sizes, human strengths and qualities were essentially no different from any other. What was possible for them is also possible for us.

1.5 The Qualities of Genius

So just what are the characteristics of those who we regard as "geniuses"? Tony Buzan and Raymond Keene in their book, "Book of Genius" define history's geniuses as those displaying the following qualities:

1. vision: the ability to see yourself succeeding in your goal
2. desire: the passion or wish to accomplish the goal
3. faith: the belief that you will succeed
4. commitment: the willingness to act on the vision
5. planning: the definition of how to realise the goal
6. persistence: the dogged determination to reach the goal
7. subject knowledge: a thirst to know about your subject
8. mental literacy: an understanding of the brain's power
9. positive attitude: a belief that things will work out
10. intuition: the ability to sense that something will work
11. a mastergroup: a team of others who support you
12. an internal mastergroup: a mental image of supporters
13. truth: an awareness of what is true and real
14. courage: the ability to face fear and go on.

1.6 Do-It-Yourself

In our days of super-states, super-nations and super-organisations with cradle-to-grave care and dependency cultures, it is easy to adopt the view that it is up to others to manage our own self-development. After all, maximising employee potential results in self-motivated employees; employees who achieve more; people who learn more and can apply more: all valuable benefits for the organisation. But, as Chris Argyris of the Harvard Business School has pointed out, the natural inclination of organisations, particularly the large ones with the larger resources, is against the kind of people self-development produces. The conclusion is that self-development is a do-it-yourself skill and a do-it-yourself activity.

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1.7 States of Existence

All of us in our adult lives find ourselves predominantly in one of three states: survival, maintenance or development. Survival means just getting by, a state that is like a shipwrecked sailor afloat on a life raft in a hostile sea struggling to cling to any passing wreckage. Maintenance means reaching a safe balance between ourselves and our environments where with luck we'll come out alright. Development is the only state that we control and determine. If survival is like a swimmer in a hostile sea and maintenance is like a plumber on a leaky boat, development is like an oarsman with a course, a plan and a destination.

1.8 Creating Your Destiny

Philosophers and thinkers have for centuries puzzled over the extent to which our lives are in our own hands and the extent to which they are pre-ordained. Some believe we are who we are because of our inherited characteristics. Others believe we are the product of birth and upbringing. But all of us can set ourselves on the path we want by simply making our minds up to do it. Even in the most limiting society, we still have the free will to try. And that is the first step to creating our own destiny.

1.9 The Options of Change

So, if you are stuck in one of the survival or maintenance modes of development, ie just keeping your head above water, or just getting by, what are the options to take you to the state of development? There are usually 4 options:

- do nothing. This may work but it also leaves you open to what others may do. It also may extend the unhappy situation that you don't like.
- change the situation. It is not always within our power to change the situation eg a job you need to keep.
- leave the situation. This may not be possible either.
- change yourself through personal development. This is always possible.

1.10 The Greatest Rewards

All of us have two distinct choices to make about what we will accomplish with our lives. The first choice is to be less than we can be. To earn less, have less, do less, and think less. These are the choices that lead to an empty life, a life of constant apprehension, instead of a life of wondrous anticipation. Our second choice is to strive, produce and accomplish as much as we possibly can. Just as a mighty oak reaches up towards the sky, we have the worthy challenge to stretch to the full measure of our capabilities.

Our ultimate life objective should be to create as much as our talent, ability and desire will allow us to create. The greatest rewards are reserved for those who bring the greatest value to themselves and those around them as a result of who they are and who they have become.

1.11 Key Points

1. Potential is the possibilities we each have inside us to perform to our maximum capability.
2. We each have unique talents not possessed by anyone else.

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3. It is the way that talents are developed and used that distinguishes the so-called "talented" from other people.
4. What we can achieve in life is a blend of talents, drive, circumstances, skill, luck and positive self-belief.
5. Self-development is a do-it-yourself skill and a do-it-yourself activity.
6. If an organisation wants to develop its staff, it cannot treat them as immature people.

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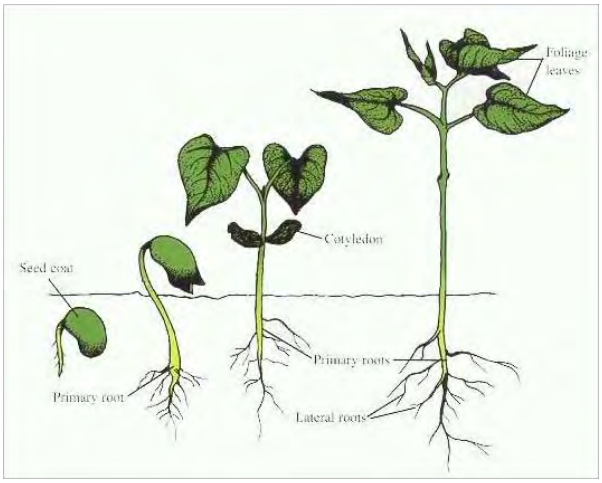
2 Self-Development

Everyone has it in them to develop themselves to their fullest potential, whether in work, relationships, family, endeavours, sport, whatever. It requires a mix of qualities, mindsets, and behaviours. Here are the most important of these qualities.



2.1 Attitude

Attitude is the start and end point of all self-development work. Without the right positive attitude of self-belief, you will not achieve anything of importance in your life. With it, everything is possible. As Charles Swindoll put it: "I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it."

Mike Pedler in his book "Managing Yourself" suggests that there are three key mental attitudes that self-managers require:

- security based on your past experiences and an awareness of who you see yourself to be;
- faith based on a belief in your talents, your opportunities and your abilities;
- hope based on a certainty that you can advance towards your goals.

2.2 Ability

You'll have a tough time achieving your full potential in life if you try to do something you have no gift for. It is much easier to take time to find out your own unique gifts and develop these. Here's what Quentin Crisp says: "It's no good running a pig farm badly for thirty years while saying, "Really I was meant to be a ballet dancer." By that time, pigs will have become your style."

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2.3 Faith

The one thing that distinguishes those who realize their full potential and those that don't is Self-Belief. In fact, the strength of your self-belief is the one thing that determines whether you conquer mountains or conquer foothills. But self-belief, or faith, is not easy. It means a belief in something that you can't prove or be certain of. It means believing in life's magic. "Faith is like a bird that feels dawn breaking while it is still dark." (Scandinavian proverb)

There are many inspiring stories of people in everyday situations who refuse to give in to received wisdom and limit their dreams. Chris Perrier for example. Chris was a 15-year-old looking for his first job on leaving school when he made up his mind that he would pursue his dream of becoming a professional football player. On April 15th 1997, Chris achieved his dream by signing on for Second Division Walsall in front of a 6,000-plus crowd. Nothing remarkable about that, you might think. But the photographs tell a different story: Chris was born with only one arm. Chris achieved the first step in his dream by overcoming his own mental and physical limitations.

2.4 Industry

There is a common fallacy that self-development work is purely a mental undertaking. Much of it is, perhaps most of it. But when the mental side is right, you still need to take action and work your socks off to achieve the goals you want for yourself. Novellist Charles Dickens put it this way: "Industry is the soul of business and the keystone of prosperity."

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2.5 Courage

It is easy to start the process of self-development, much harder to keep it going, particularly when the score seems to be going against us. That's when we need courage. Lots of it. Sometimes we need a bold David versus Goliath kind of courage. At other times, we need a quieter courage, the kind described by Mary Radmacher-Hershey: "Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying: "I will try again tomorrow"."

In 1995 Norman Vaughan conquered his mountain at last. Norman Vaughan was one of the earliest explorers to map out the landmass of Antarctica. In 1925, he discovered an ice-capped mountain 10,000 feet high. His fellow explorers named it Mt Vaughan after him. For over 60 years, Norman cherished the dream of actually climbing his mountain. The chance came when at the age of 88, he made an expedition to Antarctica. But it was a disaster. The plane crashed, killing his dogs, injuring the pilot and scuppering the whole expedition. Norman determined to fulfil his dream. The next year he tried again. Despite serious arthritis in his legs and a dangerous icy climb that would have taxed a man a quarter his age, Norman eventually made it to the top of his mountain.

"It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves." (Sir Edmund Hilary)

2.6 Chance

The combination of all the factors of genuine self-development, such as ability, faith, self-belief, and awareness, are the factors that produce what we call "luck". Quantum physicists tell us that there is no such thing in the universe as random accidents. Everything that happens to us is a result of our mental self-belief and our physical action. In fact, we always get what we expect to get, no more, no less. Anatole France described it this way: "Chance is the pseudonym God uses when he doesn't want to sign his name."

2.7 Perseverance

All self-developers know the feeling of working hard to what they imagine is the finishing line only to find that the line has moved further on when they get there. In truth, when we have big goals and many goals, there is no finishing line. But we still need to persevere. "All endeavour calls for the ability to tramp the last mile, shape the last plan, endure the last hours' toil. In the fight to the finish, spirit is the one characteristic we must possess if we are to face the future as finishers." (Henry David Thoreau).

All personal growth follows a similar curve which has its own momentum and takes its own time. We can identify 7 stages on the route to achieving a goal:

1. the initial blip on the growth curve is the initial excitement of new goals. Our motivation is high.
2. disappointment sets in soon after the initial blip when we realise things aren't going to be as easy as we thought.
3. failures outstrip successes and we begin to wonder if we did the right thing. This is the time for strong self-belief.
4. the arid plateau at the bottom of the trough is when we stabilise things. This is the time to invest in the future.

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5. dogged persistence accompanied by learning sends the curve upwards.
6. the point of breakthrough occurs when we find the formula that works for us.
7. we move comfortably to the goals we set and are able to think about setting new ones.

In the final analysis, it doesn't much matter whether you become a champion on the world stage or a champion in your own little neck of the woods. The feeling you will have will be exactly the same: one of satisfaction, achievement, and triumph.

2.8 Key Points

1. No matter how bad things seem, every situation in life has strengths which can be exploited.
2. The limitations on what we can do in our lives are largely self-imposed.
3. Sound values and character-building principles are the foundations of personal growth.
4. When we use the principles of self-management, our growth towards a goal is teleological, like a missile.
5. Just as individuals can develop themselves, given the right principles, so can organisations and teams.
6. Organisations cannot develop the potential of their people unless they change their styles of managing from disempowering to empowering ones.

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3 Know Yourself

Self-knowledge is the starting point on the journey of self-development. Self-knowledge gives us a window onto our potential. It indicates where our strengths lie, what things we are naturally good at and how we might combine our natural gifts with the opportunities around us. Here are some of the main ways to find out just where your potential lies.

3.1 Self-Research

The starting point for your journey of self-development is You, the person in the mirror. Looking at yourself, your strengths, likes and dislikes, preferences, and skills is an essential first step in your self-development plan. Here are some of the ways you can carry out your own self-research.

- look in the mirror and notice what you see
- journalise and diarise. Diaries are useful for recording events and your reactions to events.
- write down a dialogue with parts of yourself. If you have a fear, call it "Bill" and have a chat with him. He might give you insights into what really makes him happy and what makes him afraid.
- get feedback on your work and behaviour from colleagues and friends. For a balanced view ask your critics' views as well.
- study your relationships and how they make you feel
- draw your life history to date and project it forward.

3.2 Self-Knowledge

Here are 3 self-research techniques that will give you an insight into what directions you should be following.

1. Cluster Graphs. A Cluster Graph can show you who you like to be with and work with. It shows in a cluster all the people who are important in your life. By analysing the sort of people you are interested in, you can get a reflection of your own interests.
2. Repertory Grids. A Repertory Grid records the way you handle key incidents in your daily life and so indicates the things you do with ease and those you find difficult.
3. Life Charts. A Life Chart draws a line of your life to the present date charting the ups and downs. You can project it into the future to show where you want to go next.

3.3 Strengths

In "Play to Your Strengths", Donald Clifton and Paula Nelson suggest five ways we can discover our strengths.

1. Listen for yearnings. Yearnings are often triggered when we see someone doing something we'd like to do or feel we could do better.
2. Watch for satisfactions. When we get a glow of satisfaction from doing a job, even though we don't know why, it's likely to be a strength.
3. Watch for rapid learning. A strength is characterised by initial rapid learning that continues for a lifetime.

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4. Be aware of moments of excellence.
5. Watch for total performance of excellence. Total performance of excellence is a flow of behaviour when there are no conscious steps in evidence or in the mind of the performer.

3.4 Easy to Learn and Easy to Do

Dr Viktor Frankl, who wrote the book "Man's Search for Meaning", said that you can divide the things in your life into 4 categories according to the degree of difficulty in learning them and the degree of difficulty in doing them.

1. things that are hard to learn and hard to do. These are likely to be your weak areas. No matter how much you try and how often you come back to them, they are things you are never going to enjoy or do with ease. Make them a small part of your life, done out of necessity not choice.
2. things that are hard to learn and easy to do. These are likely to be everyday skills that take time to learn but, once mastered, are never forgotten, like riding a bike and tying your shoes.
3. things that are easy to learn but hard to do. These are likely to be activities that, although you know how to do them, always present a challenge. They include physical activities like chopping wood and changing a car wheel.
4. things that are easy to learn and easy to do. These are where your natural talents lie because you engage in these activities with carefree, natural and unrestrained ease and joy.

3.5 Your True Passion

The secret to finding your strengths is to do what you love. Steve Jobs, legendary founder of Apple Computers and Pixar Animation Studios, said:

"Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick. Don't lose faith. I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work.

And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle.

Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma - which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary."

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3.6 Your Personality

Your personality is the set of characteristics that don't change during your life but can develop in healthy and positive directions. Your personality characteristics also indicate what things you will find come naturally to you. There are many different kinds of personality typologies and assessments, such as the Myers-Briggs model of 16 personality types and the Enneagram model of 9 personality types. These personality models can offer clues to the things you prefer to do in your life, which are invariably the things you are good at and where your natural strengths lie. Here are some of those models.

3.6.1 Humours

The word "humour" originally meant "moisture" or "fluid". The Ancient Greeks believed that the human body was made up of four kinds of fluid or humour: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. When these were in equal proportion, the body was healthy; when out of balance, ill.

The four humours came to be associated with four personality types:

1. blood = sanguine (quick, enthusiastic and changeable)
2. phlegm = phlegmatic (slow, calm, lazy)
3. yellow bile = choleric (excitable, proud, quick to react)
4. black bile = melancholic (pessimistic, sad, slow to react)

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Hans Eysenck in our own day has adapted the four humours around scales of introversion and extroversion, stability and instability to create a personality typology.

3.6.2 Temperaments

Eysenck's classification of temperaments is the basis of many personality tests. Each of the four predominant temperaments has a range of characteristics similar to those of the ancient Greek theory of humours.

1. melancholic: moody; anxious; rigid; sober; pessimistic; reserved; unsociable; quiet.
2. plegmatic: calm; even; controlled; reliable; carefree; thoughtful; passive; peaceful.
3. sanguine: easy-going; lively; in charge; outgoing; carefree; responsive; sociable; talkative.
4. choleric: aggressive; touchy; changeable; restless; optimistic; impulsive; active; excitable.

3.6.3 Yin-Yang

In Oriental philosophy, everything in the universe is considered to have two opposite and complementary characteristics. Thus human beings are male and female; we have a right and left side, back and front, up and down. Our lives are influenced by day and night, hot and cold, water and fire, sun and moon. And so on.

The two principles are known as Yin and Yang. Everything associated with life has either a yin force or a yang force. While they are different, they are also part of the same life force. When a yin element becomes too yin, it seeks balance by becoming yang and vice versa. Perfect equilibrium is held to be non-dynamic and thus leads to stagnation. Everything is therefore in a state of flux.

We can use the Yin-Yang dichotomy to assess what we are like normally or under a given set of circumstances and thus gain insight into our inner natures.

3.6.4 Job Classifications

Mumford and Salisbury asked a group of people to answer the question "Who am I?" twenty times. The work role featured prominently in every response. It seems that our identity is wrapped up in the job we do.

A. Maccoby suggested there were five different job classifications:

- experts driven by mastery, control and autonomy
- defenders, driven by protection, dignity and power
- helpers, driven by caring, sociability and relating
- innovators, driven by creating, competing, and glory
- self-developers, driven by balancing, mastery and play, knowledge and fun.

B. Richard Bolles in "What Colour is your Parachute?" says that people are attracted to working with: things, data, ideas, knowledge or other people.

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3.6.5 Jobs and Personalities

As Steve Jobs said earlier, there is nothing more satisfying and enriching than to find work that matches our strengths. When we do this, our potential to grow and succeed is unlimited. John Holland suggests that, when you choose a career or job, it should reflect the things you like to do. He says there are 6 different types of job category...

1. working with things
2. working with data
3. working with others
4. serving others
5. working to innovate
6. investigators and analysers.

3.7 Values and Life Centres

In growing up, we develop a set of values that become imortant to us. These values become the source of our sense of self-worth, our security, wisdom, and power. In his book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People", Stephen Covey says that our set of values are like the bedrock to our life and work. They are the things that create our own personal circles of influence and centres. Some of the common centres are focused on the following: our spouse, our family, ourselves, pleasure, money, work, possessions, friends, enemies, and institutions such as church or organisation.

Some people are lucky enough to perceive their talents at an early age, perhaps at school or in the family. Others come to them slowly after a process of wrong turns and failings. Others may not come to self-knowledge until late in life when they suddenly see with blinding clarity where their lives have been taking them. The important point to remember is that, at whatever point it comes, it is always possible to turn self-knowledge into self-realisation.

3.8 Key Points

1. By getting to know ourselves better, we can discover our own strengths and potential.
2. We can research ourselves by noticing how we perform in different life situations.
3. When we see someone doing something that we feel we could do better, it is likely to be a strength.
4. The Yin-Yang dichotomy offers us insight into the way we tend to behave normally or in certain circumstances.
5. We invariably describe who we are by reference to the jobs we do.
6. We each tend to prefer to work with one of the following: people, things, data, ideas, or knowledge.

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4 Goals and Goal-Setting

Goal-setting is the one activity that sets apart self-developers from those who survive or just get by. Goal-setting enables us to create the future we want to happen rather than live the future that others want to happen. In goal-setting, we take charge. Here are 7 ways to set reachable goals.

4.1 Start With Your Strengths

Although you can base your goals on anything you want, your chances of success are greater if, first, you base them on your strengths and second, on the current opportunities in your field. To find out your strengths, do some self-research, such as a personal SWOT: your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

- strengths are the things you are good at and enjoy doing. Strengths-based goals provide their own motivation.
- weaknesses are the things that you have to do, but either dislike doing or make slow progress in.
- opportunities are the external circumstances you expect to arise or can create which will aid you in moving towards your goals.
- threats are those external circumstances that are unlikely to help you and may set you back.

While we must keep an eye on weaknesses and threats, our goals should be built around strengths and opportunities.

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4.2 Put Your Goals in Writing

Written goals have a way of transforming wishes into wants, can'ts into cans, dreams into plans and plans into reality. The act of writing clarifies your goals and provides you with a way to check your progress. You can even add reasons to give you more motivation. So don't just think it - ink it!

In "Chicken Soup For The Soul", Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen told the story of a 15-year-old boy called John Goddard, who in the 1920's wrote down a list of goals that he wanted to achieve in his lifetime. They included: exploring the River Nile, climbing the world's highest mountains, following a career in medicine, playing Clair de Lune on the piano, marrying and having children, owning a cheetah, learning 3 foreign languages, visiting the birthplaces of both his grandfathers in Denmark and England, running a mile in 5 minutes, and riding a horse in a Rose Bowl Parade. John wrote down 127 goals and when the 21st century dawned, he achieved his 109th goal – which was to live to see the 21st century. How did he achieve so many of his goals? By writing them down as a way of giving commitment to his dreams.

4.3 Dream Big

One of the factors that restricts the realisation of our full potential is the belief that we shouldn't go for big goals. Yet all the evidence of those who realize big goals is that we can always achieve far more than we think. David Schwartz says in his book "The Magic of Thinking Big": "Big goals attract big resources like a magnet."

There is nothing wrong in thinking big when you set your goals. But you need to remember that a goal and a dream are not always the same thing. In his book, "Straight From the Gut", Chairman and CEO of General Electric, Jack Welch recalls a meeting with the top people from his nuclear engineering division. For over an hour, the executives laid out their goals to sell three nuclear reactors a year in the United States. At the end, Welch thanked his executives but said that, no matter how well-intentioned, it was no more than a dream to expect the USA to buy nuclear reactors again. A more realistic and pragmatic goal would be to perhaps service existing nuclear facilities. Today, GE are top in their category of servicing nuclear plants. They don't invest in reactors any more.

4.4 Pitch Each Goal

Once you have set your ultimate goal, you then need to set the intermediate goals that will get you where you want. Don't pitch these too easily or too ambitiously or they will drop into the Drop Zone. Aim to make them challenging: out of reach, but not out of sight.

4.5 Imagine Yourself Succeeding

When your will, your rational left-brained self, comes into conflict with your imagination, your creative right-brained self, your imagination wins every time.

Mark Victor Hansen tells the story of the child who was frightened of monsters under her bed. To calm the little girl down, Hansen suggests it's better to appeal to the little girl's imagination than her reason. So, instead of saying something like, "Don't be silly, there are no monsters there", say something like, "Don't worry, sweetheart, our monsters are the kind that look after kids".

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Like children, we often imagine the worst. If we want to achieve our goals, we need to imagine ourselves succeeding. Such thoughts send out an energy that attracts complementary thoughts from people who can help us achieve what we want.

Jonny Wilkinson is one of the most prolific goal-scorers in rugby union. His tally for the England team is 1090 points more than anyone else has ever achieved. Wilkinson scored the winning drop-goal that secured England the World Cup in 2003 scoring in the last minute of extra time.

When he takes a conversion kick, he uses his powers of visualisation as much as his skill.

He says, "I use the seam of the ball as a target, the ball leaning slightly to the left. Then I go back and visualise the line of my kick, dead straight between the ball and the middle of the posts. That line is fixed in my mind like concrete. Then a few steps to the side. I see the path of the ball in my mind, then a deep focus, imagining all the power going through my leg. You try to be in total control of the path of the ball, kick up and through it."

4.6 Express Them Right

It's important to express your goals in the right way.

- never express your goal in terms of what you don't want; always in terms of what you do want
- express your goals in performance terms not reward terms
- express your goals in terms of how others benefit
- express your goals according to the principles which matter.

Whilst focusing on goals is a sure way to move towards them focusing on some goals at the cost of neglecting others is a way to achieve hollow victories. It is like the man who worked so hard to provide for his family that he neglected them in the process and ended up losing them from his life in separation and divorce. Some of the other areas that need to be considered when you set goals in, say, your work life are the effects on home, marriage, health, social life, leisure activities, spiritual life. When we manage to harmonize or align goals in one area with those in another, we find that motivating forces in one area actually help those in other areas at the same time. As psychologists put it, they become "ecologically worthwhile".

4.7 Set Goals In Terms of Behaviour

When we set goals for ourselves, they should be expressed in behavioural terms, rather than in terms of status, rewards or position. That's because behaviour is something within our power, while status, rewards and position are not. Formulating goals in behavioural terms also means we present a strong positive image of ourselves to our brains. The brain, not knowing the difference between a real or imagined experience, then seeks to act in accordance with the presented image.

4.8 Pursue Your Goals with Passion

The driving force behind your goal-achievement is Desire. You must desire your goals constantly, vividly and with a burning passion, knowing that you have already achieved them and now only need to realise them. If you do, you cannot fail to achieve them. It was said of Michaelangelo that, such was his focus and desire, he could blot out every distraction while working on a project such as the statue of David, until it was completed.

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Goal-setting is central to maximising our potential because it enables us to create something unique and new in our lives. Goal-setting allows us to feed our goal-oriented brain and puts us in control of our futures.

4.9 Key Points

1. Goal-setting is the one activity that distinguishes self-developers from those who just get by.
2. Write your goals down, so that you have a way to measure your progress.
3. Build your goals around your strengths.
4. Set your goals as big as you can.
5. Pitch your goals so that you can just reach them.
6. Express your goals in terms of the actions within your power, not the rewards outside your power.

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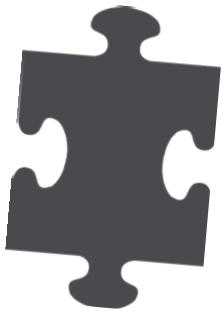

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5 Programming Your Goals

Programming is a computer term that aptly describes what happens when we feed a goal into the network of our minds. We give it the goal and then programme it to achieve it. It then works like a locked-on missile seeking out its target. The following are proven programming techniques that will ensure you land right on target.

5.1 Affirm What You Want

Affirming what you want means stating your goal in the present tense as if you'd already achieved it. The brain takes whatever action needed to comply with the affirmation. Affirmations should be positive, realistic and expressed in emotive words such as "I love…" and "I enjoy…". All of life's outstanding achievers use affirmations. World champion boxer Muhammed Ali said, "I am the greatest". Composer Ludwig van Beethoven said, "I know that I am an artist". Affirmations can also be made for teams or even whole organisations:

"We are proud of our workforce."

"We enjoy maintaining and improving our high standards of work."

"We thrive on the feedback we get from our customers as a way of knowing how well we are doing."

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5.2 Visualise It

Visualisation means seeing yourself in your mind's eye having achieved your goal. The secret of visualisation is to do it in such rich detail, and with all your senses, that you are fully there. Ray Kroc, founder of restaurant chain McDonalds, had a regular bedtime routine, in which he would imagine all the day's problems written on a blackboard. One by one, he would visualise them being solved. As a result, he managed to sleep like a log.

There are many examples of how mental visualisation can aid actual performance, especially in the sports world.

One example is Air Force Colonel George Hall, who was captured in the Vietnam War and held in prison for 7 years. Each day, Hall played a full game of golf in his imagination. One week after his release, he entered the Greater New Orleans Open and shot a round of 76.

Another example comes from the Moscow Olympics of 1980. The Russian team split some of their athletes into 4 groups and gave them different levels of practical and mental training:

- group A spent 100% of their time in practice
- group B spent 75% in practice and 25% on mental
- group C spent 50% on each
- group D spent 75% on mental and 25% in practice.

Group D won the most medals.

5.3 Motivation

The likelihood that we will reach our goals depends on our level of motivation. The word "motivation" comes from the Latin verb "movere", to move. Motivation is a drive that causes movement or a reason to move. Gestalt therapy argues that when we are content, with our needs satisfied and no goals to achieve, we are whole: "Gestalt" is German for "the whole structure". We are in a static state but going nowhere. When we present a new goal to our subconscious brain, we move out of the static state into a state of positive discontent. This state provides us with the motivation to move towards the goal.

When our goals depend on others, there are two main motivation techniques, push and pull. These are a matched pair. While pushing is shooting with a high-velocity rifle, pulling is fishing with a tempting bait. With pushing you create repulsion and fear often based on the loss of something desired; with pulling you create desire and attraction, often with the promise of something desired. Pushing is more difficult than pulling and may be far less effective. When you push, you're like a sheepdog telling a flock of sheep where to go but sometimes they can scatter in all directions. When you pull, you're like a shepherd calling the flock towards you; they know there's only one place to go.The best motivation is a mix of push and pull. You push to break people away from their current stupor; and you pull to see them come home to the goal.

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5.4 Practise Your Shots

The more you practise your shots, the more likely you are to score well when the need to act arises. It's what cricketers do in the nets. Or teams that rehearse fire drills each week. Or entrepreneurs who visit their dream home each day as if they already owned it. The brain cannot tell the difference between actual reality and imagined reality and so will simply believe you have already achieved your goals.

5.5 De-Bug With Positive Self-Talk

Just as a computer programme occasionally gets infected with viruses and bugs, so your own goal-setting programming can get infected with setbacks, doubts, and feelings of failure. That's when you need an anti-virus mental programme to get rid of the bugs. One such programming is Positive Suggestion which is activated whenever you have thoughts of fear, panic or doom. Simply replace your negative thoughts with positive ones and remind yourself of your progress: "Every day in every way I am getting nearer and nearer my goals."

5.6 Leave It Alone

Once we feed our goals into our subconscious brains, it's very important that we let our brains get on with the job without interference. The conscious brain is like the machine operator while the sub-conscious is the machine itself. This means that you have to let go and resist the temptation to analyse or check how it's doing. It is like the penalty shooter who starts worrying about how he should hit the ball, which way the goalkeeper might move, what the crowd might think if he misses. Inevitably, his worry makes him take his eye off the goal and he misses the target.

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5.7 Pray With Heartfelt Gratitude

Prayers are a form of programming that people have practised for centuries. But with one important difference from other kinds of programming. As well as verbalizing or internalizing something you want, you give thanks as if you already possessed it. Such gratitude connects you to a mightier power than you possess and unleashes great forces that work on your behalf.

When you practise these programming techniques to achieve your goals, you will achieve with scientific certainty whatever you desire.

5.8 Key Points

1. Programming is a way to create a mental focus for our goals.
2. The brain works best when it is left alone to find its way to a programmed goal.
3. Affirmations should confirm your self-image as an individual or team.
4. Visualising yourself having reached your goal sends powerful images for your brain to work on.
5. The best kind of motivation is an internal one driven by a desire to achieve a goal we want.
6. We can motivate ourselves if we associate achieving our goals with thoughts of pleasure, and missing our goals with thoughts of pain.

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6 Super-Energy

The biggest threat to self-developers is lacking the energy to reach their goals. This can happen in three main ways: through physical tiredness; mental exhaustion; or emotional and spiritual fatigue. These three energy drains can be restored with three kinds of energy source, what we can call "super-energy".

6.1 Physical Energy

A programme of regular exercise and aerobic fitness creates the physical energy necessary to see us through to our goals. Aerobic exercise is any exercise which is done "with air". It includes walking, ski-ing, running, jogging, rowing, and physical lovemaking. The benefit of aerobic exercise is that it sends messages to the brain that we need more blood. The body responds by increasing the amount of blood in circulation, ups the level of red blood cells, haemoglobin and plasma and creates masses of additional blood capillaries. The result is more energy and vitality to do what we want.

6.1.1 Aerobic Exercise

Aerobic exercise can have beneficial effects on all parts of the body:

- on the lungs. Aerobic exercise draws replenishing oxygen into the capillaries of the lungs and helps to eliminate waste
- on the heart. A healthy heart beats less per minute than an unhealthy heart. This means that it has less work to do and so is more efficient.
- on the brain. 40% of our blood supply goes to the brain and feeds it oxygen. The more blood we produce as a result of aerobic fitness, the more productive are our brains.
- on the muscles. The muscles become leaner, finer and longer. When they are strong, they also act as mini-pumps for the heart.
- other effects. Other effects of aerobic fitness are that the digestive system is massaged and cleansed; we sleep better; and we feel psychologically better.

6.1.2 Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is essential in creating a healthy bloodstream, the foundation of all good health. As well as filling you with fresh air, deep abdominal breathing relaxes the solar plexus, the source of much of our tension, and internally massages the stomach muscles. It also activates the lymph system to oxygenate each cell of your body and remove waste.

Breathing is life. When we think of life, we think of animation and the Latin root for animation, "anima", means both "breath" and "soul". Breathing is the soul of life. Yet many people do not breath properly. They breath in shallow bursts, erratically and only with the lungs. The result is that they do not attain a state of relaxation or full energy.

There are two keys to deep breathing:

1. exhale all the air from your body before you breath in
2. inhale using your abdominal muscles. As you fill your abdomen with air, your lungs also expand and gradually you fill with air up to your throat.

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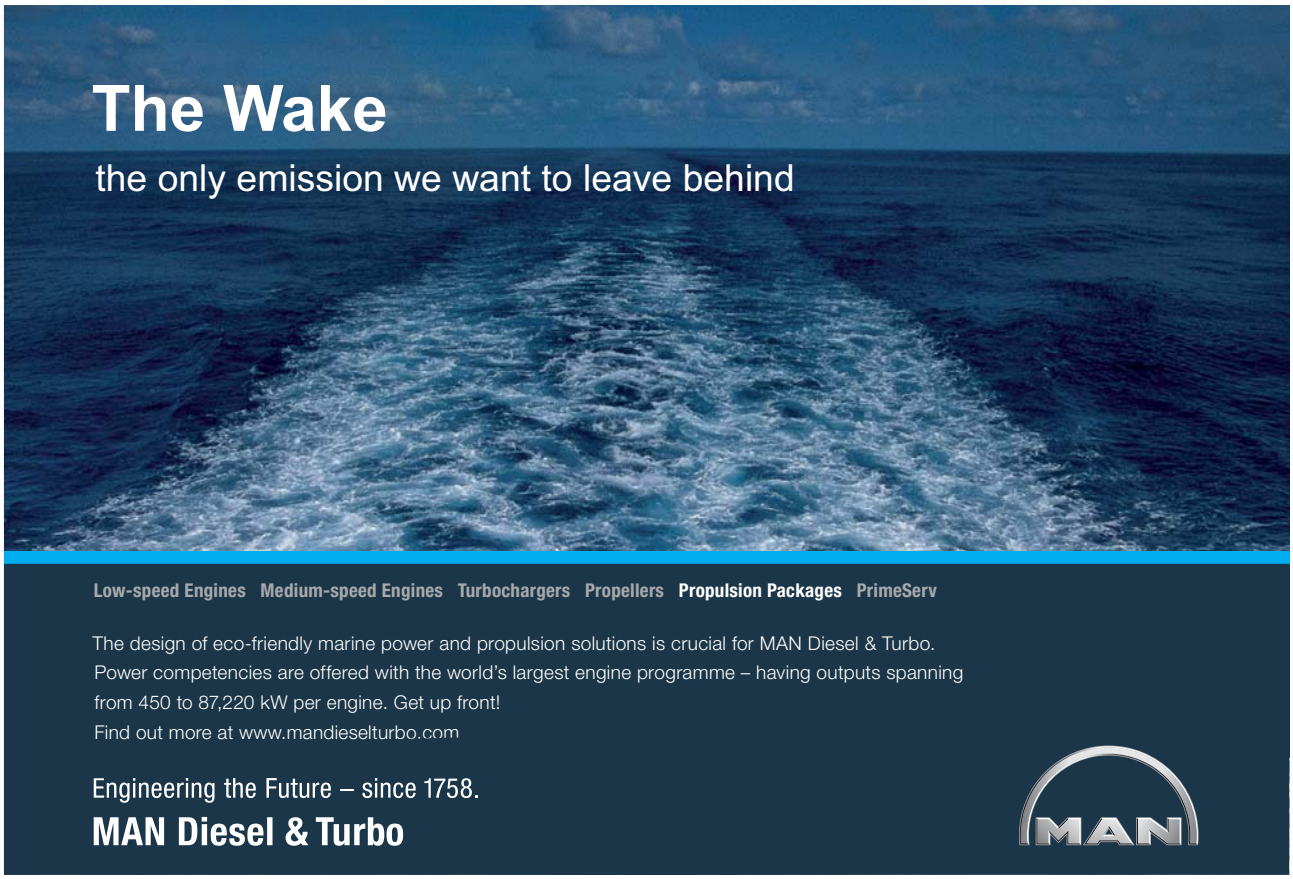
As well as filling you with fresh air, abdominal breathing relaxes the solar plexus, the source of much of our tension, and internally massages the stomach muscles.

6.1.3 Diet

The quality, quantity and type of food you eat makes a significant difference to your health and fitness and so to your energy levels. Put simply, you are what you eat. A number of dietary principles have been established for years as being the basis of good health. These include...

- eating fresh food
- eating a varied diet
- eating plenty of water-rich foods
- eating less
- listening to what your body needs.

The brain needs to be well-nourished to provide all the energy it is capable of. Foods that are good for the brain include: oils from fish such as mackerel and salmon; carrots which contain vitamin A, good for scavenging up free radicals that can attack the brain; vitamin B1, found in wholemeal bread, vegetables and cereals, which helps burn up the carbohydrates which provide the brain with its energy; iron in liver, eggs and leafy vegetables which assists in bringing oxygen to the brain; and linoleic acid, part of the make-up of brain membranes, which is found in polyunsaturated fats.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6.2 Mental Chains

To be mentally fit, we need to be free of some of the chains that shackle us to erroneous and unhelpful beliefs. These include the "not...enough" beliefs such as, "I'm not clever enough" or "I'm not pretty enough" or "I'm not brave enough". Other mentally limiting chains include believing what others tell us we can and can't do, accepting that things won't change, and believing that change requires impossibly difficult demands on us. When you free yourself of the mental chains that come from others, you break out of the mental limitations that stunt your growth.

Earl Nightingale tells the story of the farmer who, early in the growing season, found a one-gallon jug beside his field of pumpkins and, for no particular reason, poked a small pumpkin into the jug without damaging the vine. Later when the pumpkins were full grown and were being picked and stacked, he came across the jug again, this time completely filled with the pumpkin he'd poked inside. The pumpkin had filled the jug completely, and had stopped growing; it was the size and shape of the jug. Earl realised that, just like the pumpkin in the jug, we often stop growing by accepting the chains of our past. If we wind up in spaces too small, it's because we make the decision not to grow any more. We poke ourselves into a small space. However, just as we have the power to limit our growth, we also have the power to break through the limitations and become all we can be.

6.3 Setbacks

When you set yourself up to achieve big goals, it is inevitable that you will meet setbacks at some point through rejections, early failures and frustration at what appears to be a hopeless task. But it is how you deal with setbacks that determines how long it will be before you are back on course. Don't be discouraged. Learn something from every setback. Find some smaller successes instead. Recognise that adversity builds mental muscles.

6.4 Worry

Worry arises when we start to let doubts creep in about what could happen to us if things go wrong and is a close friend of fear. To free yourself of mental worries, turn worry inside out by thinking about the best that could happen not the worst. Take things one step at a time by living in day-tight compartments. And, whenever you have fears, remember that FEAR is a mnemonic for False Evidence Appearing Real.

In "The Habits of Highly Effective People", Stephen Covey tells a story written by Arthur Gordon called "The Turn of the Tide".

In it, Gordon recalls a time when he was overcome by negativism and worry. In the end, he went to see a physician who told him to spend the following day in the place where he had been happiest as a child. Then he gave him four prescriptions in sealed envelopes, to be opened at 9, 12, 3 and 6 o'clock the next day.

Gordon duly went back to his favourite retreat beside the sea. At 9 o'clock, he opened the first prescription. It read: "Listen carefully." Gordon sat back and did as instructed. For the rest of the morning he tuned in to the sounds of the birds and the sea and felt a growing peace.

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At noon he opened the second prescription. It read: "Try Reaching Back." Gordon thought about the meaning of this phrase and allowed the many memories of his past to come flooding back to him. Reaching back, he recalled times of happiness, achievement and fulfilment.

When three o'clock came, he opened prescription number three and read: "Examine Your Motives". Gordon thought of the work he was engaged on at present. Slowly it dawned on him that all his present endeavours were aimed at satisfying his own needs. He changed his thoughts and motives so that they were aimed at satisfying the needs of others.

Finally, at six o'clock, Gordon opened the last prescription and read: "Write your worries in the sand." He did as instructed, writing the few remaining worries he had and turned homeward, knowing that the lapping waves would soon wash all his worries away.

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6.5 The Energy from Others

Self-developers achieve most when they work with others, rather than against them or in isolation from them. Knute Rockner, an American baseball coach, never played anyone who didn't like all his teammates.

Self-developers listen more than they talk.
Self-developers develop the likeability personality.
Self-developers don't see people as superior or inferior to them; just as people.
Self-developers take advice from others.
Self -developers welcome criticism non-defensively.
Self-developers don't use comparisons with others to put themselves or others down.

President Lyndon Johnson of the United States had a remarkable affinity for getting to know and like people and for getting them to know and like him in return. This is Johnson's 10-point plan for getting along with others:

1. learn to remember people's names
2. be an "old-shoe person" - someone who is easy to get along with
3. acquire an easy-going nature, so things don't ruffle you
4. guard against the impression that you know it all
5. cultivate the quality of being interesting
6. study to get the "scratchy" features out of your personality
7. drain off your grievances; heal your misunderstandings
8. practise liking people until you genuinely do
9. never miss a chance to praise people
10. give spiritual strength to people and they'll give genuine affection back.

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6.6 Give Spiritual Strength

Giving spiritual strength to others is the last point on Lyndon Johnson's Get-Along Guide. Mike George of relax7.com says that you don't need to be a religious person to give out spiritual strength to others. All it needs is an awareness of "God within us". Literally, this translates into "enthusiasm". When someone has this quality in a group, they are like the sun coming out on a cloudy day. Such people have the following features:

1. they never see the dark side of things
2. they are energetically proactive
3. they don't seek the limelight
4. they bubble with ideas
5. they infect others with their upbeat nature
6. they respect everyone they meet
7. there is a sparkle in their eyes
8. they live in the moment.

Like the sun, such people have a great attraction about them. By demonstrating super-energy, they are natural leaders.

Brain power
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6.7 Synchronicity

Various writers have alluded to a curious phenomenon that happens when you tune in to other people. Without exchanging words you can have the same thoughts. The psychologist, Carl Jung, called it "synchronicity" or meaningful chance. Others might call it coincidence or a synergistic response. What has been found is that when you tune in to others, you are able to tap into a collective consciousness as if all resources and knowledge came from a higher existence. Scientists have discovered it when they produce similar work at the same time but with no contact. It has also been discovered in the natural world when animals in different parts of the globe adopt similar behaviours at the same time. And in a mundane way, it is what happens when you and a colleague have the same thoughts, hum the same tune and do the same thing at the same time.

Super-energy is a mix of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual energy. Physical energy is ours for the taking if we learn to stay fit and look after our bodies. Mental energy is available if we learn how to turn negative into positive thinking. Emotional and spiritual energy is available if we connect with others in ways in which we can get along.

6.8 Key Points

1. Exercise is a reminder that we can act and not just be acted upon.
2. To increase your energy, practise eating healthily and eating less.
3. We deplete our mental energy when we allow doubts, excuses and limiting beliefs to creep into our thinking.
4. It is how we deal with setbacks that determines whether we will win in the end.
5. Put effort into getting to like others and removing those "scratchy" features of your own make-up.
6. Tap into the combined energies of others who are working in the same fields as you.

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7 Action and Progress

Although goal-setting, programming and energy sources are the fuel for achieving our potential, nothing happens until we take action. Action is the one thing that distinguishes high-achievers from dreamers and hopers. Here are the important features of the Action stage of goal achievement.

7.1 Preparation

Time spent on preparation is an important prelude to effective action. Some of the best preparation techniques are those used by professional sports people. There are 5 techniques they often use to get themselves ready for a competition.

1. preparation: of equipment, materials, and themselves
2. attunement: switching on to time, place and mood
3. warming-up: practising some simple preliminary moves
4. awareness: pinpointing outcomes for the task
5. relaxed concentration: believing that your best work is done when you are relaxed and focused at zero-point arousal.

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7.2 Focusing

The word "focus" comes directly from the Latin word "focus" meaning a hearth or fire. In ancient times, the fire was in the centre of the house. There are 2 types of focus. Hard focus is when we concentrate on our goal with all our attention. We have tunnel vision. Nothing else matters. Soft focus is the opposite of hard focus and allows us to open up our awareness to include the whole environment connected with our goal. We are aware of all opportunities in a quiet way. We are even aware of being aware.

When we direct our thinking on a job in hand to the exclusion of all distractions and diversions, we gradually find ourselves in a state of single-minded immersion. Others use other terminology to describe this state of focusing. For social scientist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, it is "flow"; for author Richard Carlson, it is free-flow thinking; for others, it is zero-point arousal, concentration, absorption. We can get to this point only by letting go of thoughts of the past and worries about the future.

7.3 Commitment

If faith is a mental belief that we will achieve our goals, no matter what the evidence suggests, commitment is the physical act that confirms our faith. Many people get to faith - a belief they could do it - but hesitate when it comes to commitment. They prefer to keep a way out in case it all goes wrong. When you truly commit yourself - possibly in money, materials, time, energy, and certainly yourself - you take a leap in the dark. It is only when you fully commit that you create powerful forces to help you.

"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamt would have come his way." (W. H. Murray)

7.4 Patience

For many people who have set themselves a goal that they passionately desire, accepting that "everything takes its own proper time" is a hard lesson to learn. They want to speed things up, hurry them along, get there quickly and move on. Patience teaches us that, to do things effortlessly, we must work with the pace rather than force it. A crew of oarsmen cannot win a boat race simply by rowing faster. They need to row in time with each other and this means rowing slower.

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7.5 Persistence: the Law of the Seed

Patience, perseverance, and persistence are woven into the way that Nature works. Take an apple tree. Before it sheds its leaves and fruit in autumn, the tree may produce as many as 100 apples, each with 10 seeds. That's the tree producing 1000 more seeds of itself. Nature is saying, "Most seeds never grow. So, if you really want something to happen, you have to plan for failure. That way, you'll be certain to succeed." It's the same with us. You might need to go to 20 job interviews to get one job. You might need to interview 40 people to find one good employee. You might need to talk to 50 people to get one sale. It's all about numbers and persistence.

When the great Japanese potter Takashi Oyama was a young apprentice, he went to the acknowledged master Shoji Hamada and begged him to take him on as his pupil. Hamada eventually agreed but instead of pouring out all his wisdom and skill to the young boy, he insisted that for the first six months Oyama should do nothing else but observe him at work. When he had accomplished this, Hamada allowed the boy to do the kneading of the raw clay - but nothing else - for a whole year. At the end of 18 months, Hamada allowed the boy his first contact with the potter's wheel but he taught him nothing by means of words or explanation. In time, and when he was ready for it, Oyama learnt the art of his craft. He became the most celebrated and successful potter in Japan.

7.6 Practice

Practice may not make us perfect but it gets us to our goals. Psychologist Michael Howe of Exeter University has spent years studying the lives of great men and women. He rejects the theory that geniuses are somehow different from the rest of us but believes that so-called geniuses become high achievers because they practise their art with patience. For example, Howe found that 73 of the 76 leading composers in the world were all well advanced in their careers before their major works were written. They achieve the most because they practise the most.

7.7 Breakthrough

Somewhere on the route to your goals, after the initial blip of excitement, the disappointments of failure and the arid plateau of learning, comes breakthrough. The breakthrough point comes when more things are going right for you than wrong. You still might face obstacles and setbacks but now they don't bother you. You know how to deal with them. You no longer worry about whether you'll make it. You know for sure you will.

"A time comes (on the path to your goal) when you reach a breakthrough point; when enough things are going right in your world. You are delighted to be doing your work, yet like everyone else you still face obstacles; but whereas before you tried to avoid them now they no longer oppress you. They are part of the grist for the mill of your life and you no longer need to fight them. They are simply situations to be dealt with...no more and no less. You have used the strategies that seemed appropriate...perhaps you have suffered...and perhaps you have tasted success. From now on, your satisfaction is not measured in terms of favourable or unfavourable circumstances: your work has become a natural part of being alive." (Charles Cameron and Suzanne Elusorr)

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7.8 Happy Chance Findings

Some people believe that the reason why human beings set themselves goals is not for the sake of the goal, but for the process we go through while getting there. This process requires us to develop a range of qualities that are nearly always far more valuable than the prize at the end. We may also stumble onto discoveries that are much more important and that we wouldn't have found if we hadn't set and pursued our original goal. These happy chance findings, also known as "serendipity", are finely summed up in the Prayer of the Confederate Soldier.

"I asked God for strength that I might achieve;
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for health that I might do greater things;
I was given infirmity that I might do better things.
I asked for riches that I might be happy;
I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness that I might feel the need for God.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;
I was given life that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing I wanted - but everything I asked for;
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered;
I am among all men most richly blessed."

7.9 Key Points

1. The best work is done when you are in a relaxed state at zero-point arousal.
2. Worries about the future or fears from the past get in the way of concentrating on the present.
3. When we fully commit ourselves to a course of action, unexpected avenues open up to us.
4. In moving towards our goals, we should work with the pace of things rather than force them.
5. Research shows that high achievers are not quicker than the rest of us; they practise their art with patience.
6. When you reach a point of breakthrough in your work, the obstacles no longer become a burden but simply situations to deal with.

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8 The 3lb Universe

Because it is the place from where we create physically, mentally, and emotionally, the human brain is the powerhouse of our potential. If we want to maximise what we are capable of, we could do no better than maximise the potential of what Judith Hooper and Dick Teresi call the "3lb universe".

8.1 Recognise the Power of the Human Brain

Thanks to the work of neuro-psychologist, Petr Anokhin, we now know that the human brain is unbelievably powerful. There are 10 billion neurons and 12 trillion nerve cells in each human brain and each cell can physically connect with 100,000 others.

This means that the interconnections a brain cell can make are: 1,000,000,000

8.4 The Conscious Brain

The conscious brain is that part of our brains that deals with what we call "reality". It uses the senses to interpret and analyse information from the world around us. This is done through perception, association, evaluation, and decision-taking. However, the analytical conscious brain is very limited. Despite the power of the brain, we can only hold about 7 or 8 different thoughts in our head at any one time.

8.5 The Sub-Conscious Brain

The sub-conscious brain is the storehouse of all our past thoughts. This is the source of the most creative use of our brains. For example, if we set goals for our brain, the sub-conscious part of our brain will supply us with information in line and will work by itself to find solutions as a way of restoring its balance. There are a number of ways to reach our subconscious creative selves...

1. Intuition: sensing when something is right shows up through your bodily sensations. Some people get gut feelings, others feel what's right in their heart of hearts. Every time you need to make a decision, listen to your body.
2. Meditation: meditation allows you to put your brain into an alpha state, or, when you become proficient at it, a waking theta state. These states reduce your blood pressure, and increase your immune system.
3. Soft Focus: soft focus allows your eyes to focus on a neutral area and become aware of everything around you. Immediately, you will increase your peripheral vision and your mind will be calmed. This is the focus of martial artists and athletes.

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8.6 The Reticular Activating System

The Reticular Activating System (RAS) is a group of cells in the brain which monitors sensory messages to the brain. It is a natural filtering device which allows only personally profitable data or threats to get through. A simple analogy of how the RAS works is a busy airport terminal lounge where you may be waiting to board a plane. You are largely oblivious to the noise and sounds around you, but if you have programmed your brain to listen out for the name of your flight, you will hear it when it is called. The RAS is the key reason why we need to feed in our goals to our brains and then leave the brain to work by itself. It is like an evolutionary survival system, where only relevant information for our survival is allowed to get through while irrelevant information is left to die by the wayside.

8.7 The Supra-Conscious Brain

In recent years, there has become a growing realization that the functions of the conscious and sub-conscious brain are only a small part of what constitutes our mind's functions. This is the realization that the mind is something bigger than the physical brain. For example, you have over 200 trillion cells in your body all functioning in a healthy person in harmony and doing their own thing without any conscious input from you or your brain. So what keeps these cells working? A super-conscious mind that links to a consciousness that extends beyond our brains, our bodies and our senses, what some people call the "supra-conscious" brain.

8.8 Maximising Our Brains

We maximise our potential when we maximise the power of our brains. We can do this in some of the following ways:

- use both left and right brains to dream new goals and plan the steps to reach them
- align the three evolutionary brains by thinking about your goals, feeling passionately about them, and taking appropriate focused action
- tap in to the creative power of the brain to make better decisions and find better solutions to problems
- recognise the limitations of the analytical brain and tune in to what the brain is telling you through intuition and instinct
- recognise that there is a powerful consciousness that extends beyond your brain but is accessed by your brain to things beyond normal thought.

Thought and the human brain are the defining features of human beings. But we now know that what we can do with our brains is not limited. Like our brains, our consciousness is infinite and so is our potential.

8.9 Key Points

1. Although a lot still has to be discovered about the human brain, it is clear that most people vastly underuse the power of their brains.
2. The human brain is a result of three evolutionary developments creating instinctive behaviour, emotions and thought.
3. When used together, the left and right functions of the brain bring together logical thinking and imaginative thinking.
4. The sub-conscious brain is the seat of the self-image.

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5. When presented with a problem to solve, the subconscious brain is capable of finding its own ways to a solution.
6. The brain works best when it is left to get on with its work.

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9 Positivity

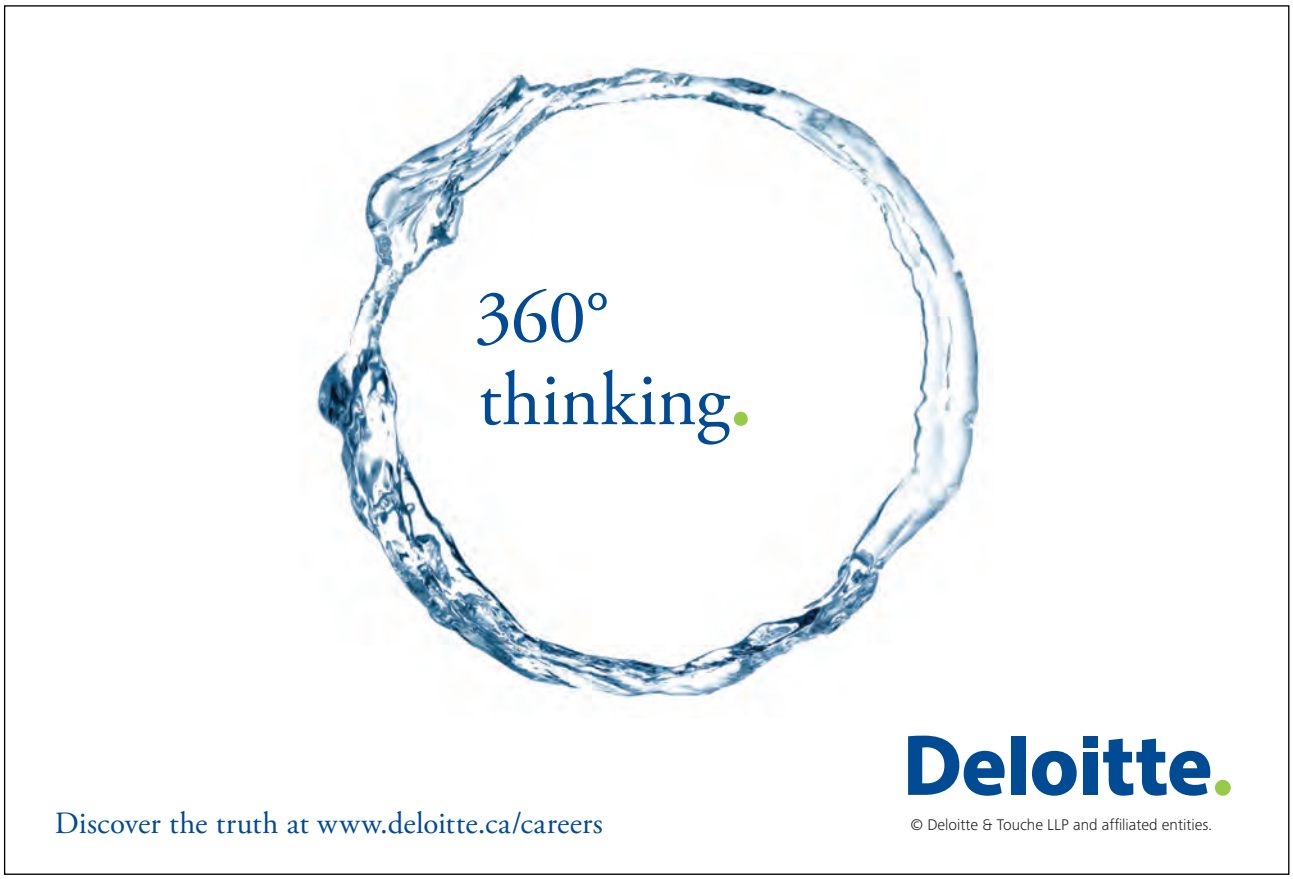
Our positive spirit is the Adventurer in us. It is the part of us that glimpses what we are capable of. Through learning how to think positively about our goals, and to act positively in our daily habits, we attract to ourselves all the means which make our goals achievable. Here are the main ways you can become more positive.

9.1 Create a Positive Self-Image

Your self-image is the person you think you are. You are your own creation. When your self-image is low, you attract into your life all the experiences and conditions that tell you how poor you are. Conversely, when your self-image is high, you attract experiences telling you how great you are. The easiest way to create the self-image you want is through your self-talk. Simply control the chatter in your head. Boost your morale regularly, morning, noon, and night with what you tell yourself.

"What I am giving you is gold.

Mothers, fathers, managers, bosses, superintendants, company presidents, everybody, heed this: raise your own self-esteem to where it belongs and good things will happen, both for you and others. How do you do that? You do it through your self-talk. You must think well of yourself. You must know you're good. Start by controlling your own self-talk. From here forward, it is out of place in your life or your business to be devaluative, belittling, or sarcastic. Such junk has no place in a high-performance organisation just as it has no place in a high-performance individual.



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What you will do is start looking for ways to boost your morale with your self-talk. You are going to do it regularly. You are going to do it every day: morning, noon and night." (Louis Tice)

9.2 Talk in Terms of Positive Goals

Our brains need images of positive goals to work towards. They become confused if we feed them negative goals. So, if it is your aim to give up smoking, don't say: "I want to stop smoking". Instead, say "I want to enjoy a pleasant evening out with a couple of refreshing drinks, breathing in fresh, revitalizing, clean, pure, uncontaminated, healthy air."

9.3 Have Positive Expectations

Numerous experiments confirm the truth that when you expect the best, you usually get the best, and when you expect the worst, you usually get that too. This is known as the self-prophesying principle. So, at the start of any new enterprise or at the start of each new day, look forward with expectations of the very best.

"Look to this day:
For it is life, the very life of life;
In its brief course
Lie all the verities and realities of your existence:
The bliss of growth,
The glory of action,
The splendour of beauty.
For yesterday is but a dream,
And tomorrow is only a vision;
But today well liv'd makes every
yesterday a dream of happiness
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well therefore to this day!
Such is the salutation to the dawn."
(Kalidasa - Indian dramatist)

9.4 Turn Negatives into Positives

Like the man who had too many lemons and turned them into lemonade, or the man who bought snake-infested land and learnt how to turn their skins into shoe-leather, every seeming setback can be turned around and made into a triumph. This is what Teddy Roosevelt did in the following story.

In 1912, just before the nomination of Teddy Roosevelt as presidential candidate, it was discovered that no one had obtained permission to run off all 3 million pictures of Roosevelt and his running mate, Hiram Johnson. Legal penalties for the copyright violation could be as much as $3 million. But it was too late to turn back. The printing plates were ready. Any changes would cost millions.

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The chairman of the campaign committee decided to play a different tack and sent a telegram to the photographer saying, "Planning to use 3 million copies of the Roosevelt photo. Great publicity opportunity for you. What will you pay for us to use the photos?"

"Appreciate the opportunity," replied the photographer. "Can only pay $250."

The chairman replied, "OK. Deal."

9.5 Always Review Positively

If we are positive at the start of an enterprise, we should be equally positive at the end when we review. Many people become discouraged when things don't go to plan and they beat themselves up for missing out on the one thing that didn't work. But there are always gems of real worth in every situation, even apparent disasters, if we only look hard enough. One way to review positively is to use igniter phrases rather than chloroform phrases. So, an obstacle is not a "barrier" but a "challenge"; a setback is not a "disaster" but a "chance to learn"; and a tough problem is not a "failure", but "a nut we're going to crack".

The story is told of an African king who grew up with a friend who had a very positive outlook on life.

One day when they were both out hunting, the king accidentally blew his finger off to which the friend replied, "This is good". Annoyed with this remark, the king immediately dispatched his friend to jail.

A year later the king was out on another hunting expedition when he was captured by cannibals. They put him in a pot and were about to eat him when they noticed his missing finger. Unable to eat anyone who wasn't whole, they let him go.

Full of remorse, the king released his friend from jail and begged him for forgiveness for sending him to jail.

"That's OK," said the friend. "Why?" replied the king. "Well, if I hadn't been in jail, you'd have had all your fingers. And I'd have been with you."

9.6 Mix With Positive People

One of the biggest drains on our enthusiasms is to be surrounded by people who are negative. They may be well-meaning with their warnings but they are misguided. You have two choices if you want to survive as a positive person: avoid them or train them. One clever way to train negative people is to simply ignore them when they use discouraging conversation. Simply blank them. Then when they return to positive expressions, re-connect. Very soon, they will learn that you are a person who has a sunny disposition and they will simply drop their previously gloomy attitude with you.

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Allan Pease recalls how one of his colleagues, Alan, was conducting a seminar on communication. One student would make for him during each break and find any excuse to complain. He would complain about the rain, about his football team, about how he was being treated by his ex-wife and so on and on. Alan decided that he would ignore every single negative comment. He just looked elsewhere, picked at his lunch or read the newspaper. When however the odd positive comment cropped up, Alan's face would light up and he would engage in normal conversation. After using this technique for a while, the student started to communicate good-naturedly with Alan while reverting back to pessimism with everyone else.

9.7 Use Positivity for Good Health

Emile Coue, the founder of auto-suggestion, carried out a number of studies that proved that positive thinking can cure both mental and physical pain. George Gallup in his study of old age also found that a positive attitude was one of the key ingredients of long living. More recent studies have shown that brain cells actually shrivel up and die under the effect of negative thinking while positive thinking actually changes the composition of body cells for the better. Which all goes to show that positivity is better than any medicine you could buy from the chemist store.

9.8 Get the Positivity Habit

Good habits are as easy to make as bad ones. It's simply a matter of choice and repetition. So, if you want the positivity habit in your life, do these things every day:

- dress the best you can
- smile more

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- try to genuinely like others
- give people positive strokes of recognition
- give people the most precious gift you have: more of your time
- when you meet a stranger, be the first to shake hands
- be interested in the world around you
- be thankful for everything you get.

Positivity is not a Pollyanna-ish rose-tinted view of things which ignores reality, but a choice we make about thinking, acting, and speaking which creates reality. As such, it has the power of magic.

9.9 Key Points

1. Positive ways of thinking do not distort reality but rather make choices in how we see and interpret reality.
2. All lasting change about ourselves starts with the way we think and then moves to the outside.
3. It is the imagined self-image that determines how we feel about ourselves not the actual way we are.
4. High-performance individuals and teams never devalue themselves in their self-talk.
5. The brain cannot work towards achieving a negative goal.
6. When you expect the best, you usually get the best; when you expect the worst, you usually get that too.

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10 From Mastery to Mystery

There comes a time on the journey of self-development when we reach a level of working that is different from all the previous levels. It is likely that the new experiences are no less challenging than before; it's just that we see them in a different way, accomplish them with more ease and flow; and put them into new contexts and meanings. We have few words to describe this new state: "mastery" is one of them.

10.1 Up Your Game by Just 2%

The difference between mediocrity and superior performance can be attributed to as little as 1 or 2% more in terms of more planning, more study, more application, more interest, more attention, more positivity, more effort, and more determination.

Consider two professional golf players.

a) Bob earns £50,000 with an average of 70.9 a round.
b) Jack earns £230,000 with an average of 70.3 a round.

The slight edge difference is nothing more than one missed putt in every 18 holes but it is worth £180,000 in tournament winnings.

"The fact is, the difference between peak performers and everybody else is much smaller than "everybody else" thinks." (Charles Garfield)

10.2 Love What You Do

Love for one's work is the simplest recipe for mastering one's goals. It also makes the process of self-development one of joy.

- love is self-acceptance and recognition, rather than the need for acceptance and recognition by others.
- love has no boundaries as action has. In the words of Mother Teresa: "We cannot do great things on this earth. We can only do small things with great love."

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- love is emotional intelligence, which along with technical intelligence and intelligent action is the route to mastery.
- love is doing difficult things simply.

"Work is love made visible and if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy." (Kahlil Gibran)

10.3 Become an Artist

When we grow and develop, we do not simply acquire new and improved skills. We gain a depth of understanding that changes who we are and how we see life: we reach artistry.

The apprentice knows the rules. The craftsman knows the rules and performs the skills. The master knows the rules, performs the skills, and sees the point. The artist knows the rules, performs the skills, sees the point and understands the deeper meaning.

We can all be artists. In "The Search for Meaning", Charles Handy quotes a businessman who is awestruck by the performance of a group of "ordinary people" in the French circus troupe, Cirque Plume and wonders: "Why do we have to bribe our people with so much money to work as well as this? Are we missing something?"

See the light!
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10.4 Pursue Excellence Not Perfection

The difference between perfection and excellence is that perfection is a prize in the gift of others and nearly always impossible to achieve while excellence is a standard which we can work towards each day.

Perfection: completion, arriving, ending, reaching the peak, receiving the ultimate prize.

Excellence: a process, a journey, a quality standard, a way of life, relationships, attitudes, personal well-being, strategies for living, giving.

"The surest hindrance of success is to have too high a standard of refinement in our minds or to high an opinion of the judgement of the public. He who is determined not to be satisfied with anything short of perfection will never do anything to please himself or others." (William Hazlitt 1778-1830)

10.5 Tithe

In the Middle Ages, the meaning of "tithing" was to hand over one tenth (a "tithe") of your land and stock to your landlord. Today tithing means giving part of what you earn to others. Writer Anthony Robbins suggests we should give 10% (the original tenth) of our income away and not just when we are successful but also when we are starting out.

Some of the ways to tithe are:

- investing in your family's future
- investing in your own future
- investing in helping others in your community
- investing in those who helped you
- investing in those who need your help
- investing in those who are now where you once were
- investing in others for no reason than what this tells you about yourself.

"You make a living from what you get; you make a life from what you give." (Arthur Ashe)

10.6 The Gratitude Attitude

The dictionary tells us that gratitude is "the expression of gratefulness and thanks" but this doesn't begin to convey its real effect. Here are an alternative set of definitions.

Gratitude stops you taking your life for granted and helps you realize how many good things you have in your life.

Gratitude makes others feel better.
Gratitude makes you feel better. In the words of an Arabian proverb, "The hand that gives the roses always keeps some of the scent."
Gratitude raises your awareness of things around you.
Gratitude is easy, quick, and simple.

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Gratitude is an instant blues-breaker and stress-reliever.
Gratitude changes your view of so-called "bad" things.
Gratitude frees you from petty annoyances.
Gratitude inspires you.
Gratitude puts your thoughts and feelings on a high vibration level that in turn attracts back to you more things to be grateful for.
Gratitude nourishes the soul.
Gratitude is like compound interest on money in the bank: the more you put in, the more you get out.
Gratitude is a spiritual act because it acknowledges that the origin of all good things is a source outside ourselves.

10.7 Identify Yourself with Your Work

The ultimate awareness is when your work is no longer apart from you but a part of you. The features of mastery as the ultimate awareness are that...

- we feel whole; everything falls into place; layers of meaning make sense
- work is simple if not always easy
- our work is like a love affair
- we are fully in the experience of our work, body, mind and soul, the way children often are
- there is no more tension or effort
- doing is all that matters, not the rewards
- we are what we do.

"Always you put more of yourself into your work, until one day, you never know exactly which day, it happens, you are your work." (Pablo Picasso)

10.8 The Super-Senses

Rudolf Steiner has suggested that when we develop our work to levels of greater artistic awareness we become conscious of experiencing life on other levels not normally sensed. These are the levels of the twelve super-senses, which are:

1. A sense of being alive
2. A sense of being moved
3. A sense of balance in things
4. A sense of warmth
5. A sense of speech
6. A sense of thought
7. A sense of personality
8. A sense of vision
9. A sense of being in touch
10. A sense of being in tune
11. A sense of a taste for life
12. A sense of smelling the roses.

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10.9 Peak Experiences

The ultimate stage of personal development of our skills is often glimpsed as a peak experience. This is when we do our work with a different feeling: confident and humble, invincible and connected, calm and at the highest level of awareness.

This is how the Brazilian footballer, Pele, - arguably the world's greatest-ever player, - described a peak experience:

"I felt a strange calmness I hadn't experienced in any other games. It was a type of euphoria. I felt I could run all day without tiring, that I could dribble through any of their team or all of them, that I could almost pass through them physically. I felt I could not be hurt. It was a very strange feeling and one I had not felt before. Perhaps it was merely confidence but I have felt confident many times without that strange feeling of invincibility." (Pele with Robert Fish: "My Life and the Beautiful Game")

10.10 Celebrate and Give Thanks

Celebration at achieving our goals is right and proper. For hundreds of years, men and women have worked for six days and then stopped on the seventh to give thanks and celebrate.

- celebration marks important milestones on the journey to our goals.
- celebration marks life transitions, such as birth and beginning, endings and change.
- celebration is a sacred rite and ritual.
- celebration is a way of sharing goal achievement with those who have made it possible.
- celebration is where work meets fun.

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"There are two things to aim at in life: first, to get what you want and after that to enjoy it. Many achieve the first; only the wisest of mankind ever achieve the second." (Logan Smith)

10.11 Move into Mystery

Psychologist Abraham Maslow described the ultimate destination point of personal development as a spiritual one. He says it is possible only when all our other personal and interpersonal needs are being met and operating at a high level. Others explain this state as one of wisdom. In his work on human needs, Abraham Maslow studied people who had achieved the greatest goals open to mankind, leaders of countries, industries, professions, and the arts. He found that all these people had a number of attributes in common. They were inner-directed people. They were creative. They appreciated the world around them with awe and wonder. Central to their lives was a set of values that Maslow called the B, or Being, values: wholeness, perfection, completion, justice, aliveness, richness, simplicity, beauty, goodness, uniqueness, effortlessness, playfulness, truth, honesty, reality, and self-sufficiency.Maslow summed up this list in one word: "wisdom".

The journey of self-development often starts with improving our skills. It then progresses to improving our relationships with people. If we continue our journey, it takes us to new awarenesses where we sense a new identity in which our potential is unlimited. This is the journey from mastery to mystery.

10.12 Key Points

1. Love for one's work is the simplest recipe for mastering one's goals.
2. We tithe when we give something back to help others.
3. No matter who we are and what we do, we are all capable of turning our work into artistry.
4. Feeling at one with your work is a feature of the ultimate awareness.
5. When you master your work, you feel a connectedness with others.
6. There is a deeper meaning to your work when you move beyond performing the skills to a state of new awareness.

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The following instantly-accessible website resources provide more in-depth information on some of the tips, techniques, and features in this book.

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